

**Neighborhood Ten Study
Committee Meeting #10
July 28, 2005**

Committee members present: Henry Lukas, Bill Forster, Chip Strang, John Moukaud, Ravi Sundaram, Joan Marszalek, Sandra Uytterhoeven, Peter Sturges, Rebekah Kaufman

Staff present: Elaine Thorne, Taha Jennings

Discussion

The Study Committee continued to discuss the preliminary recommendations for the neighborhood Study. Specific areas topics included traffic calming and enforcement of traffic regulations, dealing with new development in the neighborhood, and affordable housing strategies.

Traffic Calming

A committee member reiterated that they were not opposed to traffic calming but that any proposed traffic calming projects should not be planned in a vacuum. New traffic calming features may or may not outweigh any loss of parking. There was support for traffic calming that also takes into consideration such things as pedestrian and vehicle needs at the specific location, parking availability, snow plow operations, and traffic flow issues.

Another committee member stated support for traffic calming in general in the neighborhood. It is important to take into account the residents adjacent to traffic calming locations. Someone countered that there seemed to be other less intrusive old fashioned, methods, to achieve traffic calming, particularly, by posting speed limits for autos coming off of the parkway.

In response, staff noted that one of the reasons traffic calming measures are used is to slow cars down when coherence to posted speed limits was a problem. A committee member added that the speed limit signs don't always work. Someone stated that digital signs that show how fast a vehicle is traveling seem to be effective.

The Study Committee wanted to emphasize support for traffic calming in any transportation recommendation regarding the issue. Further, the vicinity of Lexington and Brattle Street was noted as an additional location that seemed in need of traffic calming. There was desire expressed to include Standish Street in any traffic calming recommendations for Huron Village. Curb extensions were mentioned as a possible way to slow traffic, and enhance pedestrian access to the nearby Lowell Park. It was also noted that there were speeding problems along the entire length of Reservoir Street.

There was a suggestion for a general statement of support for traffic calming rather than listing individual locations. Someone also noted that it would be helpful for guidance from City staff, and in particular Juan Avendano, on where traffic claming is most needed in Neighborhood Ten.

Enforcement

A committee member felt that the neighborhood should ask the City to enforce state controlled roads, in particular, speeding, red light running, and track restrictions. Another Committee member asked if the City had the authority to do that, and that the committee should check with the appropriate city transportation staff. There was also a question regarding how much city resources should be put into enforcement on those roads. Someone pointed out that there might be an issue of losing the resources of one government agency if the other put additional resources into enforcement. The committee agreed that more enforcement is needed on the State owned roads that intersect the neighborhood. Further, that any recommendation should use stronger language than to just explore options for increased enforcement.

There was a question on whether the Study Committee's transportation recommendations should be forwarded to the City Council's sub committee on transportation. Someone suggested the creation of a separate group to deal with issues of state owned land and roads through the city. The group would consist of neighborhood representatives, as well as city and state representatives and/or staff. Another committee member reiterated the need for a responsible person or group to be in charge of overlapping City and State issues. The Committee felt it would be helpful to get feedback from city staff on the most effective way to deal with the issue of state roads.

Land Use and Zoning

A committee member advocated for a general downzoning in the neighborhood in order to force developers to come to the public, and also give more power to residents most affected by new development. It was also noted that requiring developers to go through a process would give neighbors time needed to think about proposals and have meaningful dialogue with the parties involved.

Someone stated that the zoning in the neighborhood is almost 35 years old and neighborhood needs regarding zoning have changed since then. Staff pointed out that much of Neighborhood Ten as with the rest of the city was downzoned during the Citywide rezoning process that took place in 2001.

It was suggested that there be proactive discussions regarding the large commercial properties in the neighborhood. Neighbors and affected residents should come up with ways to get benefits for the neighborhood via incentives for developers. There was a suggestion for a study process for the commercial areas in Neighborhood Ten similar to recent studies completed and underway in the North Point and Concord Alewife neighborhoods respectively. It was also noted that neighborhood residents are usually at a disadvantage because they don't have the same experience and or knowledge as developers.

It was also suggested that areas of idiosyncratic zoning should be identified, especially those parcels that have large development potential and relatively small structures. Another specific area mentioned for further review was the BA district along Concord Avenue. In particular, what is allowed in the BA zoning district and any methods to ensure the appropriate urban design of the area. It was noted that a portion of Huron Village was also zoned BA, however, Huron Avenue has a wider right of way, and many

of the buildings located at the intersections of two streets are altered at the corner of the structures to allow for entrances and better sight lines.

There was some discussion on having Les Barber from the Community Development Department come and speak with the Study Committee again in order to answer additional questions. However, there was a concern about asking Les to come back prematurely, especially if there was no clear issue or specific problem that the Study Committee needed help in answering.

Affordable Housing

A committee member stated that they had reservations about current City housing policies, and felt that too much money was used for housing. It was added that it seemed the City had more of its fair share of affordable housing and noted that affordable housing in Cambridge is advertised outside of the city. It was also felt that the affordable units put a tax burden on other residents who may themselves be forced to leave the City.

Another committee member stated that they were against dividing larger units into smaller units. Someone else questioned if accessory apartments are already allowed. It was noted that accessory apartments as well as dividing some of the largest houses into several units were discussed as strategies to provide more affordable housing in the Neighborhood.

A question was asked regarding the City's involvement and interest with Harvard University's plans for the Allston area. Someone pointed out that there is a lot of land in Cambridge that is non-taxable and the residents pick up the tab. Further, it does not seem as if the institutions in Cambridge are going to stop growing therefore, they should take more responsibility of the tax burden.